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Princeton's Oral History

Dulles Study Nearly Ready

Special to The Inquirer

PRINCETON, N. J., March 25.—"Frankly, Collins, I think our chances of saving the situation there are not more than one in ten," the late Secretary of State John Foster Dulles said of Vietnam in 1954.

Dulles was addressing Gen. J. Lawton Collins, the former Army Chief of Staff sent "to see whether a viable military position could be created in South Vietnam."

Six months later, Dulles visited Gen. Collins in Saigon. The general recalled, "He did say to me that at least we had increased our chances down there to something like 50-50, rather than 10-to-one."

HISTORY PROJECT

Dulles' original statement and Collins' later recollection are part of the Dulles Oral History Project nearing completion at Princeton University.

The Oral History Project consists of tapes and transcripts of interviews with almost 300 persons who knew Dulles. Among those interviewed were President Dwight D. Eisenhower, Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, military and diplomatic leaders and members of the Dulles family.

A report of the project is given in the current issue of "University, a Princeton Quarterly." The report is by Prof. Richard D. Challener, who was a prime contributor to the project,

and John M. Fenton, associate director of Princeton's Department of Public Information.

U-2 SITUATION

President Eisenhower recalled the situation regarding the U-2 flights over Russia:

"The State Department, the Defense Department, and the CIA and ourselves—a very limited bunch—were in on the U-2 business."

He noted that many times the flights were discussed and that as President he had said, "Well, boys, I believe the country needs this information and I'm going to approve it. But I'll tell you one thing: Some day one of these machines is going to be caught, and we're going to have a storm."

Dulles took the opposite view that the Russians knew about the flights and would never make a protest, according to the interview.

"Foster, I just think you're wrong," Eisenhower recalled saying.

POWERS SHOT DOWN

(In May, 1959, a U-2 plane piloted by Francis Gary Powers was shot down in the Soviet Union, sparking an international incident and causing the collapse of a scheduled Big Four conference in Paris. Powers tried and imprisoned. He was released in 1962 in exchange for Rudolph Abel, a convicted

Soviet spy serving time in the United States.

The Oral History Project is a supplement to the personal files of the late Secretary of State, who graduated from Princeton in 1903. The Dulles papers have been given to the university and are housed, along with those of James Forrestal, Adlai E. Stevenson and Bernard Baruch, in the John Foster Dulles Library of Diplomatic History.